Ruth Valmy

Goldwyn Girl

Ruth Ownbey on the May 19, 1941, cover of LIFE.

SAUMUEL CLAESSON

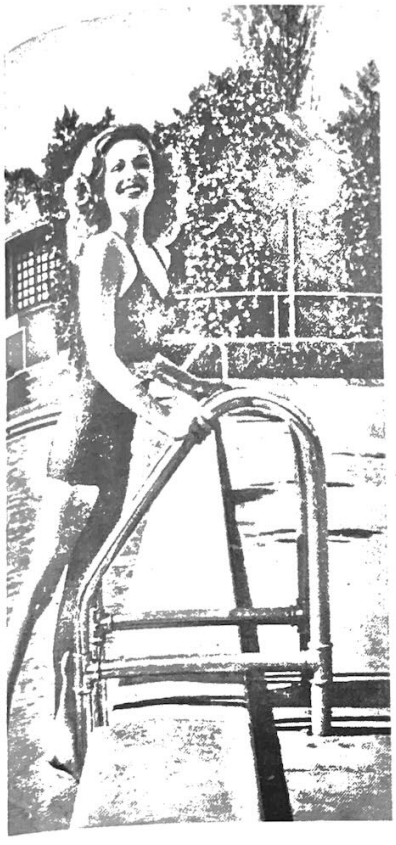
Ruth Valmy was a petite redhead who was one of the Goldwyn Girls, a group of starlets who appeared in various musicals in the 1940s. She never had onscreen credit in her movies, but she was given a good buildup by appearing on the cover of magazines like Life and True Story. Millions of Dr. Pepper saw her as the spokesmodel for the popular beverage, appearing in their advertisements, billboards, calendars, and postcards.

I was surprised to see that there wasn't a lot written about this curvaceous lady, born Lola "Ruth" Amber Ownbey on January 24, 1922, in Asheville, North Carolina.

The first phase of her career began in New York after marrying Alfred Licklider, a divorcé with a 14-year-old son. The newlyweds needed an additional source of income, so Ruth, 5'4" and 116 lbs., did various modeling gigs. Her agent John Robert Powers got her steady work with Koret of California and Dr. Pepper. While estranged from her husband, she was crowned Mrs. America, Miss Rheingold, and Mule Queen in 1941. Her success prompted her to fly to Hollywood to get into the movies, staying with her aunt while she did auditions. *Du Barry Was a Lady* (1943), *Up in Arms* (1944), *Belle of the Yukon* (1944), *Wonder Man* (1945), and *Night in Paradise* (1946) were among the movies she did. Goldwyn put her under contract for $100 a week.

Ruth Ownbey became Ruth Valmy after marrying a veteran named Roger Valmy. She used her influence in Hollywood to get him into the business, too, and he eventually appeared in movies himself, including *Passage to Marseille* (1944) and *Brazil* (1944).

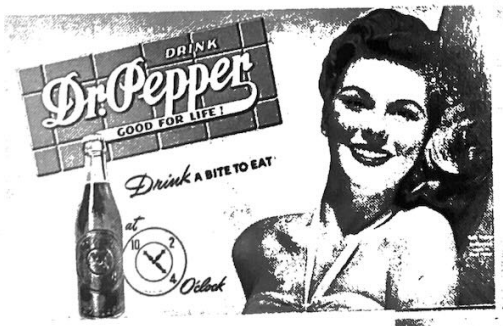
A few years later, the couple divorced due to infidelity. Eventually, she met a lawyer named Franklin Ellerbroek. They were married on February 17, 1951, and she left modeling and the movies entirely. She didn't need to work anymore because of her husband's wealth. They lived in Rancho Mirage, California, until her death on July 30, 2008.



On the cover of the October 1941 True Story.

Goldwyn Girls (left to right) Ruth Valmy, Georgia Lange, Karen X. Gaylord, and (seated) Alma Carroll in Wonder Man (1945).

Ruth Ownbey, Miss Rheingold.



Ruth advertising Dr. Pepper.